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Remarks/Arguments

Claims 1-17 and 25-28 are pending in the present application.

Claims 1-17 are rejected.

Claims 1 and 11 are amended herein.

Claims 18-24 are cancelled.

Claims 25-28 are new.

1. Information Disclosure Statement

a. *Information Disclosure Statement Filed March 3, 2004*

Applicants note that on an Information Disclosure Statement ("IDS1") filed on or about March 3, 2004 and received by the United States Patent and Trademark Office ("USPTO") on or about March 10, 2004, references A25 and A26 ("REFS1") were crossed off. Further, Applicants note that on IDS1 proximate to REFS1, the words "No Translation" appear. To that end, Applicants assume REFS1 were crossed off for allegedly being non-English documents.

To that end, 37 CFR section 1.98(a)(3) requests a concise explanation of the relevance, as it is presently understood by the individual designated in 37 CFR section 1.56(c) most knowledgeable about the content of the information, of each patent listed that is not in the English language. Therefore, there are two elements that must be satisfied before a concise summary is required. Firstly, the information must not be in the English language. Secondly, a person with the duty pursuant 37 CFR 1.56(c) must have knowledge of the relevance to the claimed invention of the non-English portions of the reference.

With respect to the references associated with references A25 and A26, it is submitted that the only relevant portions of these documents known to a person having the duty pursuant 37 CFR section 1.56 are the figures. As the figures are not in a foreign language it is submitted that no concise explanation of the relevance of the reference is required. MPEP section 609 at page 600-138 makes clear that "[a]n information disclosure

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statement filed in accordance with the provisions of 37 CFR 1.97 and 37 CFR 1.98 will be considered by the examiner assigned to the application.” Further referring to MPEP section 609 at page 600-148 it is stated that “[i]f no translation is submitted, the examiner will consider the information...insofar as it is understood on its face, e.g., drawings [emphasis added], chemical formulas....”

To that end, Applicants respectfully contend that REFS1 comport with the requirements of 37 CFR § 1.98(a)(3). Applicants submit herewith a Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement (“*SUPP IDS*”) having REFS1 listed thereon such that the same may be considered in the present application. More specifically, references A25 and A26 are cited as references F1 and F2 of *SUPP IDS*, respectively.

b. *Information Disclosure Statement Filed March 24, 2005*

Applicants note that on an Information Disclosure Statement (“*IDS2*”) filed on or about March 24, 2005 and received by the USPTO on or about March 28, 2004, references D42 (Japanese Patent 02-92603) and D43 (Japanese Patent 02-24848) (“*REFS2*”) were crossed off. Further, Applicants note that on *IDS2* proximate to *REFS2*, the words “No Translation Provided” appear. To that end, Applicants assume *REFS2* were crossed off for allegedly being non-English documents.

To that end, referring to *IDS2*, reference D55 (Translation of Japanese Patent 02-92603) and reference D56 (Translation of Japanese Patent 02-24848) serve as copies of the translation of references D42 and D43, respectively. To that end, Applicant re-lists references D42 and D43 on the aforementioned *SUPP IDS* such that the same may be considered in the present application. More specifically, references D42 and D43 are cited as references F3 and F4 of *SUPP IDS*, respectively.

2. Objections to the Drawings

In the Office Action, new corrected drawings in compliance with 37 CFR § 1.121(d) were required. To that end, the Applicants have attached sheets of drawings which

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include Figs. 7-10 that replace the original sheet that includes Figs. 7-10. No new matter has been introduced by these amendments.

3. Rejections under 35 USC § 102(e)

In the Office action, claims 1 and 11 stand rejected under 35 USC section 102 as allegedly being unpatentable over United States patent application publication 2004/0036201 to Chou et al. ("*Chou*") and United States patent application publication 2003/0071016 to Shih et al. ("*Shih*").

a. *United States patent application publication 2004/0036201 to Chou et al.*

i. Claim 1

Claim 1 defines a method to improve a flow rate of an imprinting material, the method including, *inter alia* collecting thermal radiation at a target, defining collected thermal energy; and transferring the collected thermal energy to the imprinting material by conduction, with the imprinting material being substantially transparent to the thermal radiation while being responsive to ultraviolet radiation.

Chou is completely silent with respect to a method of collecting thermal energy at a target and transferring the collected thermal energy to an imprinting material by conduction. Rather Chou teaches a mold and a substrate each comprising a layer of conductive or chargeable material ("*LAYERS*") employed to generate electrical or magnetic forces between the mold and the substrate to press the mold into a moldable surface of the substrate. See ¶ [0023] and ¶ [0029]. Further, referring to ¶ [0032] it is stated, "an electric field for imprinting the substrate can be created between appropriately dissimilar materials by the use of light, heat or RF radiation." Chou is completely silent with respect to the *LAYERS* collecting the light, heat or RF radiation, much less conducting the thermal energy to a surface thereof. Thus it becomes clear that Chou does not teach Applicants' claimed invention of a method of collecting thermal energy at a target and transferring the collected thermal energy to an imprinting material by conduction.

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Furthermore, Chou teaches away from Applicants' claimed invention by teaching the LAYERS and the substrate are "transparent to radiation which can be used to soften or cure the moldable surface" of the substrate. See ¶ [0032]. As a result of the LAYERS being transparent to radiation, the LAYERS may not be responsive to the radiation and thus the LAYERS may not collect thermal energy directed thereupon, as described by Applicants' claimed invention. Thus, it becomes evident that Chou teaches away from Applicants' claimed invention by teaching the LAYERS and the substrate being substantially transparent to the radiation.

Based upon the foregoing, Applicants respectfully contend that Chou does not anticipate the invention defined by claim 1 and a *prima facie* case of obviousness is not present with respect to claim 1.

ii. Claim 11

Applicants respectfully contend that the arguments set forth above with respect to claim 1 applies with equal weight here and the claim 11 defines an invention suitable for patent protection.

b. *United States patent application publication 2003/0071016 to Shih et al.*

i. Claim 1

As mentioned above, claim 1 defines a method to improve a flow rate of an imprinting material, the method including, *inter alia* collecting thermal radiation at a target, defining collected thermal energy; and transferring the collected thermal energy to the imprinting material by conduction, with the imprinting material being substantially transparent to the thermal radiation while being responsive to ultraviolet radiation.

Shih is completely silent with respect to a method of collecting thermal energy at a target and transferring the collected thermal energy to an imprinting material by conduction, with the imprinting material being substantially transparent to the thermal radiation while being responsive to ultraviolet radiation. Rather, Shih teaches placing a wafer having a polymer-coated surface facing an IR-transparent optical flat device and further placing a

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patterned FEP film in between the wafer and the optical flat device such that the patterned surface of the FEP film faces the polymer-coated wafer surface. See Example 3, ¶ [0037]. Further, Shih teaches illuminating IR light thru the optical flat device and the patterned FEP film to “heat the polymer until it reaches its flow temperature.” See *id.* It is therefore evident that the polymer is responsive to the thermal radiation, and as a result, substantially not transparent to the thermal radiation. Furthermore, referring to Example 11, ¶ [0049], Shih teaches placing a wafer between a patterned FEP film and an optical flat object, with a polymer coated surface of the wafer facing the patterned FEP film surface and the back side of wafer facing the optical flat object. An IR light may be employed such that the polymer reaches its flow temperatures. See *id.* The wafer may then be cooled, without IR heating, to below the flow temperature of the coated polymer, and as a result, become hardened. See ¶ [0023] and ¶ [0049]. Shih has no mention of the polymer being substantially transparent to the IR hearing, much less the polymer being responsive to UV radiation, as taught by Applicants’ claimed invention. As a result, Shih does not direct his invention to a method of collecting thermal energy at a target and transferring the collected thermal energy to an imprinting material by conduction, with the imprinting material being substantially transparent to the thermal radiation while being responsive to ultraviolet radiation.

Furthermore, Shih teaches away from the invention of claim 1 by employing dry etch BCB (benzocyclobutene) as the polymer coating on the wafer. More specifically, referring ¶ [0036], it is stated the dry etch BCB is “available from Dow Chemicals, CYCLOTENE 3000 series.” To that end, the CYCLOTENE 3000 series may be cured by “convection oven, vacuum oven, tube furnace, reflow belt oven, and hotplate.” See EXHIBIT A, page 4. As a result, the dry etch BCB of Shih would be cured through thermal radiation, and not transparent to the thermal radiation, as taught by the invention of claim 1.

Based upon the foregoing, Applicants respectfully contend that Shih does not anticipate the invention defined by claim 1 and a *prima facie* case of obviousness is not present with respect to claim 1.

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ii. Claim 11

Applicants respectfully contend that the arguments set forth above with respect to claim 1 applies with equal weight here and the claim 11 defines an invention suitable for patent protection.

4. New claim 25

Applicants submit new claim 25 to secure an appropriate scope of the invention. To that end, Applicants request examination and allowance of claim 25.

5. The Non-obviousness of the Dependent Claims

Considering that the dependent claims include all of the features of the independent claims from which they depend, these claims are patentable to the extent that the independent claims are patentable. Therefore, Applicants respectfully contend that the dependent claims define a method suitable for patent protection.

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6. Conclusion

As a result of the foregoing, it is asserted by Applicants that claims 1-17 and 25-28 in the present Application are in condition for allowance, and Applicants respectfully request an allowance of such claims. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner call Applicant's agent at the below listed number if the Examiner believes that such a discussion would be helpful in resolving any remaining issues.

Respectfully Submitted,



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CYCLOTENE Advanced Electronic Resins

Revised: February 2005

CYCLOTENE* 3000 Series Advanced Electronic Resins

Processing Procedures for CYCLOTENE 3000 Series Dry Etch Resins

1. INTRODUCTION

The CYCLOTENE 3000 series advance electronic resins derived from B-staged bisbenzocyclobutene (BCB) monomers are dry-etch grades of the CYCLOTENE family of products, and were developed for use as spin-on dielectric materials in microelectronic fabrication. The CYCLOTENE resins are low dielectric constant and low dielectric loss materials, and feature low moisture absorption, no out-gassing, low temperature cure and excellent planarization (Figure 1). Properties of the CYCLOTENE products are given in Table 1. The CYCLOTENE resins have been widely adopted in a variety of electronic applications, including silicon and compound semiconductor passivation, interlayer dielectric, flat panel display, IC packaging, integrated passives, MEMS, wafer bonding and 3D integration, and optoelectronic components. There are four formulations of the CYCLOTENE 3000 series products which are commercially available from the Dow Chemical Company, as shown in Table 2.

An additional dry etch product, XU71918.30, was designed for flat panel display applications. Please refer to our processing guide "Technical Processing Guide for Flat Panel Display Applications" for more information on that product.

2. STORAGE

The CYCLOTENE 3000 series resins as well as the ancillary chemicals, including adhesion promoters (AP3000), rinse solvent (T1100), and stripper (Primary Stripper A) are stored at room temperature. The shelf life for CYCLOTENE 3000 series resins at room temperature is two years from the date of manufacture.

*Trademark of The Dow Chemical Company

Figure 1. Planarization ratio as a function of metal line width for dry etch grade BCB. The metal line height is 4µm.

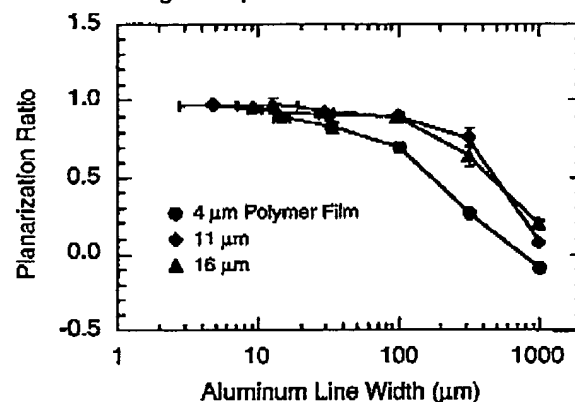


Table 1. Thermal, Electrical and Mechanical Properties of CYCLOTENE 3000 Series Resins

| Property | Measured Value |
|----------------------|---|
| Dielectric constant | 2.65 – 2.50 at 1-20 GHz |
| Dissipation Factor | 0.0008 – 0.002 at 1-20 GHz |
| Breakdown Voltage | 5.3×10^6 V/cm |
| Leakage Current | 6.8×10^{-10} A/cm ² at 1.0 MV/cm ² |
| Volume Resistivity | 1×10^{19} Ω-cm |
| Thermal Conductivity | 0.29 W/m ² K @24°C |
| CTE | 42 ppm/°C at RT |
| Tensile Strength | 87 ± 7 MPa |
| Tensile Modulus | 2.9 ± 0.2 GPa |
| Elongation | 8 ± 2.5 % |
| Poisson's Ratio | 0.34 |
| Residual Stress | 28 ± 2 MPa at RT |
| Tg | > 350°C |
| Moisture Absorption | < 0.2% |

Exhibit A
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Processing Procedures for CYCLOTENE 3000 Series Resins

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CYCLOTENE Advanced Electronic Resins

Table 2: Formulations of the CYCLOTENE 3000 series products

| Solution Properties | 3022-35 | 3022-46 | 3022-57 | 3022-63 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Solvent | Mesitylene | Mesitylene | Mesitylene | Mesitylene |
| Viscosity (cSt @ 25°C) | 14 | 52 | 259 | 870 |
| Thickness Range ^a (µm) | 1.0 – 2.4 | 2.4 – 5.8 | 5.7 – 15.6 | 9.5 – 26.0 |

^a The thickness data given above should not be construed as product specification.

3. EQUIPMENT SELECTION

In principle, spin coaters designed for photoresists and spin-on polymers can be used for the coating of CYCLOTENE resins. However, it is recommended to use a programmable spin coater having the following features: two dispense nozzles (one for adhesion promoter and one for BCB resin), a hotplate, and capability of backside rinse, top side edge-bead removal (EBR), cup rinse, and cup exhaust.

3.1. Pressurized Dispense

In pressurized dispense, both nitrogen and helium gases are commonly used. Helium is less soluble than nitrogen in resin solutions under pressure and causes fewer bubbles than nitrogen during dispense and spin coating. Pressure should be released when the resin is not in use.

3.2. Cup Rinse and Exhaust

Cup rinse is recommended at the end of a cassette to prevent the spun-off resin from drying on the cup surface and becoming a source of particles. Cup exhaust should be turned on throughout the entire coating process to evacuate the solvent vapor and to keep mist and polymer fibers below the wafer surface.

3.3. Materials for Delivery System

Teflon is the recommended material for the components of the CYCLOTENE resin delivery system, which include delivery lines, bottles, cap adapters, and filters. Kalrez is recommended for O-rings and elastomeric components. HDPE is not compatible with the mesitylene solvent.

3.4. Waste Dispose

It is recommended to dispose the waste into a container for organic solvents.

4. SPIN-COATING PROCESS

Figure 2 depicts a typical process flow of CYCLOTENE resins on a planar substrate. The

detail of the procedure for each of the steps will be described below.

4.1 Surface Preparation

The surface of substrates to be coated with CYCLOTENE resin should be free of inorganic particles, organic residues and other contaminants. Particles and residues cause coating defects and may lead to adhesion problems subsequently. A brief treatment of O₂ plasma followed by DI water rinse is usually sufficient for general cleaning purposes. If polyimide is present on the substrate, a dehydration bake (e.g., oven or hotplate bake at a temperature of 150°C or higher) followed by oxygen plasma treatment prior to BCB coating is necessary to ensure good adhesion.

4.2 Adhesion Promoter

Adhesion promoter is always recommended prior to BCB coating. The procedure for applying adhesion promoter on a substrate comprises dispensing, spreading (e.g., 50-300 RPM for 5 seconds), and spin-drying (e.g., 2000-3000 RPM for 15-20 seconds). Baking adhesion promoter prior to BCB coating is usually not required, but it can improve the adhesion of BCB to certain substrates (contact Dow for more details). The adhesion promoter available from Dow, AP3000, is effective on most surfaces, including silicon oxide, silicon nitride, silicon oxynitride, aluminum, copper and titanium.

NOTE: Vapor prime adhesion promoters developed for photoresists (HMDS) do not work well with the CYCLOTENE family of resins.

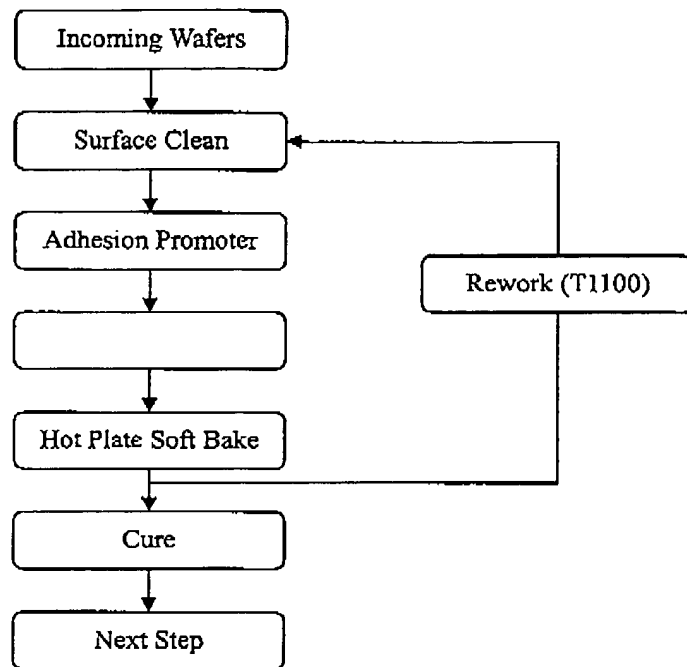
4.3 Resin Coating

Following the adhesion promoter process, BCB resin is spun onto the substrate. The coating process should be comprised of the following steps: dispense, spread, spin coat, backside rinse, topside (EBR), spin dry, and soft bake.



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Figure 2: Typical process flow steps for depositing BCB films on a substrate.



The details for each of the steps are described below.

4.3.1 Dispense

The dispense of BCB resin can be done statically or dynamically (rotating the substrate at a speed of 50-200 rpm). For optimal material usage it is helpful to dispense the resin radially from the edge of the wafer to the center, particularly for the higher viscosity formulations. The dispense volume will depend on the size of the substrate and the topography of the substrate surface. Slightly greater dispense volume is often required with increasing topography for a given substrate size.

4.3.2. Spread

Increase the substrate rotation speed to approximately 500 – 750 rpm for 5-7 seconds to spread the resin out from the center of substrate.

4.3.3. Spin Coat

Increase the substrate speed to a rate which is appropriate to achieve the desired coating thickness. Table 3 lists the correlation between cured film thickness and spin speed for each of the CYCLOTENE 3000 series resins. Note that these data are for an open bowl spin coater. When using a covered coater, film thickness will depend on both spin speed and spin time, and will generally be thinner than the values in Table 3.

4.3.4. EBR and Backside Rinse

Adjust the substrate speed to about 1000 rpm and dispense the EBR solvent (T1100) for 5-10 seconds to remove the edge-bead (about 1.5 mm from the edge of the wafer) from the top side of the substrate and to remove any contamination from the backside of the substrate. The top side edge-bead removal is optional, but it is highly recommended. The backside rinse (BSR) should not be omitted.



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Table 3: Thickness after cure (in microns) versus spin speed.

| Spin Speed (RPM) | CYCLOTENE 3022-35 | CYCLOTENE 3022-46 | CYCLOTENE 3022-57 | CYCLOTENE 3022-63 |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1000 | 2.26 | 5.46 | 13.8 | 26.2 |
| 1500 | 1.84 | 4.39 | 10.7 | 19.9 |
| 2000 | 1.59 | 3.76 | 9.04 | 16.5 |
| 2500 | 1.43 | 3.35 | 7.97 | 14.4 |
| 3000 | 1.30 | 3.05 | 7.21 | 12.9 |
| 3500 | 1.21 | 2.82 | 6.65 | 11.8 |
| 4000 | 1.13 | 2.63 | 6.20 | 10.9 |
| 4500 | 1.07 | 2.48 | 5.84 | 10.2 |
| 5000 | 1.01 | 2.35 | 5.55 | 9.64 |

NOTE: The data given above should not be taken as product specifications.

The top side EBR and backside rinse can be performed sequentially or simultaneously.

NOTE: Other solvents such as cyclopentanone and xylenes have also been observed to work well for backside rinse and EBR for BCB.

4.3.5. Spin-Dry

Following the EBR and backside rinse, it is recommended to spin the substrate at 1500-2000 rpm for about 10 seconds to dry the backside of the substrate.

4.4. Bake

After the spin coating process, the BCB film should be baked on a hotplate to remove solvents and to "stabilize" the film in order to avoid material flow during subsequent handling and curing. The temperature and time for the bake of the CYCLOTENE resins are not critical. The hotplate temperature can be set from 80°C to 150°C and the time can be as short as 60 seconds.

5. THERMAL CURE

After coating and bake, the films are cured to achieve their final properties. The cure of CYCLOTENE resins can be performed using a variety of tools, including convection oven, vacuum oven, tube furnace, reflow belt oven, and hotplate. Except for early out-gassing of residual solvent, CYCLOTENE resins do not evolve volatiles during cure, and, thus, there are no constraints on the heating rate. (However, note that optimum planarization is achieved with a relatively slow ramp.) The only constraint is that, since films of CYCLOTENE resin are susceptible to oxidation at elevated temperature

(≥150°C), the cure must be carried out under an inert atmosphere, with an oxygen concentration below 100 ppm. This condition can be readily achieved by flowing inert gas (nitrogen or argon) through a convection oven, tube furnace, or by using a vacuum furnace or oven.

CYCLOTENE resins can flow during the cure process. For optimum thickness uniformity, the substrates should be cured in a horizontal orientation.

5.1 Soft Cure

The soft or partial cure for the CYCLOTENE family of resins is designed to reach a 75-82% conversion (polymerization) and it is used for successive coating of the resin (i.e., double or triple coats) or multilayer structures (e.g., BCB/Metal/BCB) in which the two BCB layers are in contact in certain areas. The recommended temperature and time for soft cure using oven or furnace are 210°C and 40 minutes, respectively.

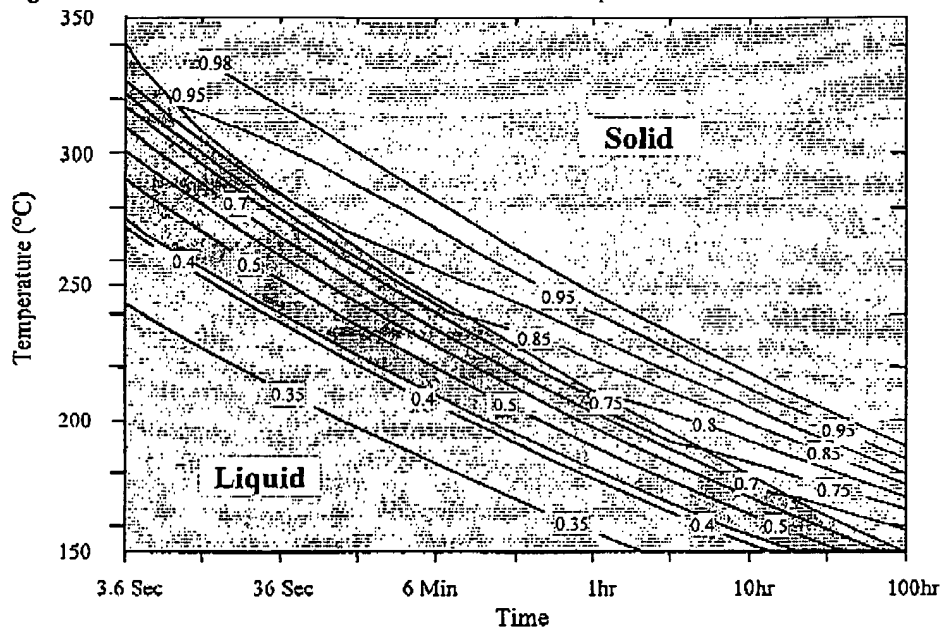
5.2 Hard Cure

The hard cure is typically carried out as final cure after all polymer layers of the device structure have been completed, and it is designed to achieve 95-100% conversion. A typical suggested profile for hard cure is 250°C for one hour in a box oven or furnace. Cure of CYCLOTENE resins at a temperature higher than 250°C does not adversely affect the properties of the film, but the temperature should not exceed 350°C. Figure 3 presents the extent of cure as a function of cure time and temperature.



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Figure 3: The extent of BCB cure as a function of temperature and time.



6. REWORK

For the rework of BCB film after bake but prior to cure, T1100 is the recommended solvent and this can be done by dispensing T1100 on the track, or by immersing the substrate in a T1100 bath at room temperature. The BCB films after soft cure can be removed by immersing the film in a Primary Stripper A bath at 90-100°C. Removal rate of soft cured BCB film increases with higher bath temperature, and is about 2µm/hour at 90°C and about 6µm/hour at 100°C. After the stripping process with Primary Stripper A, the substrate should be rinsed with isopropanol, followed by DI water rinse and dry. An O₂/CF₄ plasma treatment after strip and rinse will help to completely remove any organic residues. Fully cured CYCLOTENE films are highly resistant to most chemicals, which makes them difficult to remove. Once the film is fully cured, plasma stripping (oxygen/fluorine plasma) is usually the only viable means of removing it. A piranha (H₂O₂/H₂SO₄) or fuming nitric acid bath will remove fully cured BCB films, but metals and underlying device structures will generally not tolerate such an aggressive cleaning agent.

NOTE: For more details on rework procedures, refer to "Rework Procedures for CYCLOTENE 3000 Series and 4000 Series Resins".

7. PLASMA ETCH

Pattern definition of films made with the CYCLOTENE 3000 resins can be accomplished by means of a plasma etch process in conjunction with photoresist (PR) processing, and using either soft mask or hard mask approaches.

7.1 Etch gases

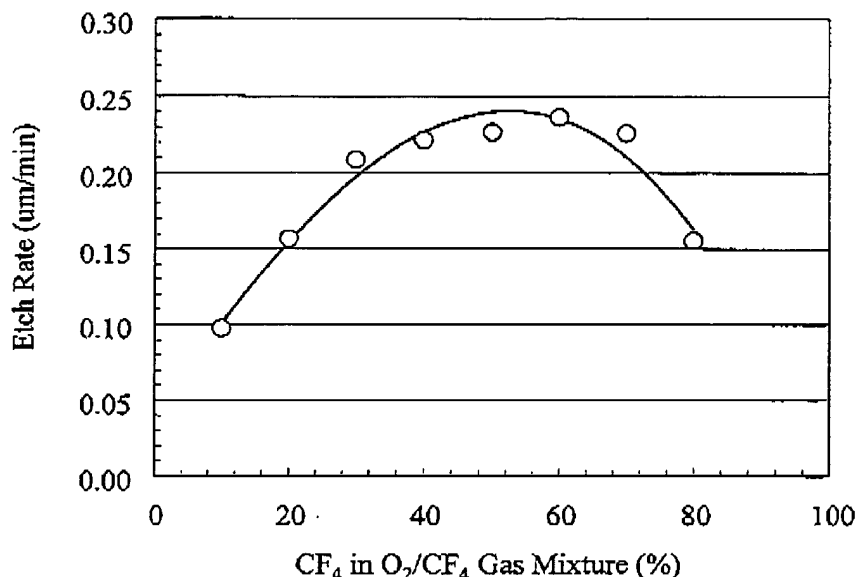
The plasma used to etch CYCLOTENE films generally requires both oxygen and fluorine species since silicon is present in the backbone of the polymer. A mixture of oxygen and a fluorine-containing gas (CF₄, C₂F₆, C₄F₈, SF₆, NF₃, etc.) has been found to produce a controlled etch rate using parallel plate or reactive ion etchers. Commonly used gas mixtures are 4:1 O₂/CF₄, or 5:1 O₂/SF₆. More fluorine can increase BCB etch rate initially, but when the fluorine component exceeds a certain limit, the BCB etch rate decreases. Figure 4 shows etch rate vs gas composition in O₂/CF₄. SF₆ tends to give faster etch rates than CF₄. Maximum etch rates are achieved with about 55-60% CF₄ in O₂ [1], or about 20% SF₆, or about 20% NF₃ [2].

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Figure 4: Etch rates as a function of gas composition for reactive ion etch process.



Though it is generally not recommended, etching of BCB in O₂ without any fluorine has been reported. [3].

An inert gas (N₂ or Ar) can be also added to the reactor to increase the overall pressure in the chamber and moderate the chemical vs. physical components of the plasma. As a result, both etch profile and etch uniformity can be improved. Adding more inert gases can lead to an increased etch rate and higher etch selectivity of CYCLOTENE resins over CVD oxide and nitride. Lower concentrations of fluorine also give better selectivity to nitride. Higher power and pressure can increase BCB etch rates, but may also lead to etch non-uniformity.

Soft cured and hard cured BCB films show similar etch characteristics.

NOTE: Oxygen plasma without a fluorine component can create an undesirable amorphous silicon oxide on the surface, thus, the etching process becomes self-passivating, and the etch rate slows down and eventually stops. The resulting SiO₂ layer is brittle and can lead to cracking of the BCB film. In addition, materials deposited on top of this oxide (e.g.,

metals, CYCLOTENE resins, etc.) typically show poor adhesion. In a via etch scheme the surface of the polymer is protected by the soft mask or hard mask, but the via side walls can be damaged. For these reasons, plasma etching in O₂ is not recommended.

7.2 Etch tools

A variety of etchers have been used. Both reactive ion etchers (RIE) and inductively coupled plasma (ICP) tools have been used with good results. Downstream etchers have also been used. Barrel etchers are not recommended, because (a) the etch uniformity is quite poor, the etch rate being much greater at the edge than at the center, and (b) the lack of temperature control can lead to film surface oxidation and SiO₂ formation even when fluorine is present.

7.3 Soft Mask Process

In this process, the photoresist employed for pattern definition is also used as a sacrificial mask for BCB etching [4,5]. Etch selectivity between BCB and photoresist films is usually found to be about 1:1. The required thickness of photoresist should be determined based on the etch selectivity between BCB and the photoresist, and the BCB over-etch scheme.



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Compatibility of the resist stripper with BCB should also be considered. Figure 5 shows the etched thick BCB profile using O_2/CF_4 chemistry on Tegal's 981 plasma etcher using a photoresist etch mask, showing sloped side wall profile and no visible etch residues. [6]

7.4. Hard Mask Process

Inorganic materials such as CVD dielectric films (SiO_2 , SiN) or metal films (Al, Cr) can be used as a non-sacrificial mask for BCB etching. If an inorganic dielectric material is adopted for the

hard mask, the hard mask layer can be retained as a part of the dielectric structure. Due to the presence of fluorine in the etch gas, there will be a finite etch rate of the hard mask material, and its thickness should take this into account. In the case of using a metal as the hard mask, the etchant used for the metal removal should be compatible with BCB. Figure 6 shows etched via profiles in $1\mu m$ thick BCB, using a $0.3\mu m$ thick oxide hard mask, which was conducted with more complicated etch chemistry on a Lam TCP 9100 etcher. [7]

Figure 5. Field and sidewall view of etched thick BCB ($7\mu m$) on Tegal's 981 plasma etcher. $15\mu m$ AZ-P4620 photoresist was used as soft mask.

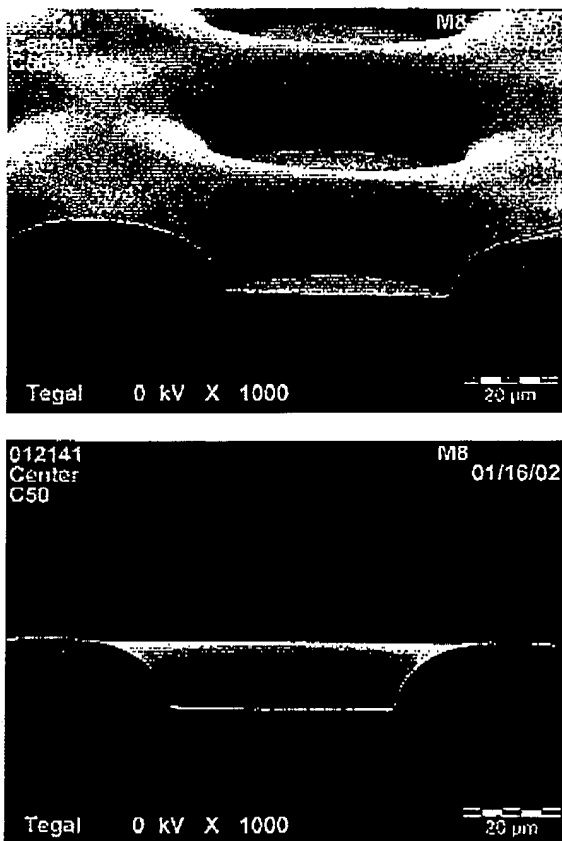
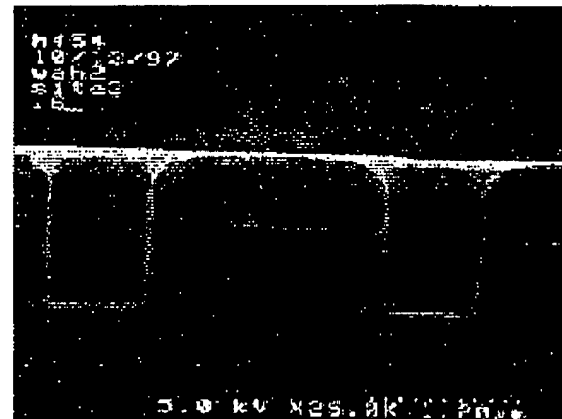


Figure 6. Sub-micron BCB via profile etched in a Lam TCP9100 etcher (Pressure: 10 mTorr, TCP Power: 1500 W, RF Power: 700 W, O_2 : 18 sccm, C_2F_6 : 2 sccm, N_2 : 40 sccm).



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Exhibit A
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Processing Procedures for CYCLOTENE 3000 Series Resins



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8. REFERENCES

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